



DO YOU *REALLY* NEED TO FLOSS? DENTISTS WEIGH IN ONCE AND FOR ALL

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Alongside washing your face before bed and eating your daily greens, flossing twice a day is one of those pieces of health advice that you *know* you're supposed to be following to a tee. In reality, though? It's not always happening (just me?).

As far as the flossing commandment, however, I can probably count on one hand (maybe even one finger) how many people I know who floss on the reg—which completely goes against what *all* dentists say.

Then again, the health staple has even come under fire in the past couple of years, with the *Associated Press* announcing that there's no scientific evidence that you need to be flossing daily. So what gives?

“Everyone should floss at least once a day,” says Timothy Chase, DMD, a New York-based cosmetic dentist and practicing partner of SmilesNY. “If you don’t, you leave food particles between the teeth and under the gums that can cause cavities, gum disease, and bad breath.”

The problem lies in your toothbrush, which only reaches roughly 25 to 50 percent of your tooth surfaces, according to Dr. Chase. “Brushing alone doesn’t go between the teeth or under the gum, where food particles get stuck,” he explains—and that’s the area where most adult cavities form.

Your tooth has *five* surfaces, according to celebrity cosmetic dentist **Bill Dorfman, DMD**. “You can only clean three of them by brushing, so two-fifths aren’t getting cleaned unless you floss,” he explains. “That’s not a passing grade in anyone’s book.” Sigh—and no one wants a failing grade in hygiene.

If you avoid the situation and stick to your toothbrush only, Dr. Chase says that you risk developing cavities, gingivitis, and eventually periodontitis—which is a serious gum infection that could destroy the bone that supports your teeth (yikes). And Dr. Dorfman adds that you can lose teeth. But, fear not—I asked about the absolute minimum amount of flossing that you can get away with and still have healthy teeth.

The answer? Once a day, according to Dr. Chase (though Dr. Dorfman is adamant that twice a day is key). Choose your own dental adventure, I suppose.

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